



Director's Message by Sandy Merdinger

Happy New Year to all of you! I'm especially happy for this year to begin as we have the new OPI School Grant Manager on board. Cal Boyle was recently hired to fill the position, and I know he will be a great addition to the state GEAR UP staff. Because of Cal and Linda's backgrounds, Cal will serve as the School Grant Manager for western schools, and Linda will move to the eastern schools. Although that means one more change for schools in the west, it will be a better fit for both School Grant Managers. Thanks to all of you for your patience as we've become fully staffed. As you have a chance to work with both Cal and Linda, please support them in their new positions so they can better serve you.

On the national level, the Department of Education announced the creation of the Center for Rural Education to consider the unique challenges facing rural schools.

"I am committed to addressing the needs of our students, educators, and parents in rural America," Secretary Margaret Spellings said in a statement. "This new center will take a leadership role in advancing the cause of rural education." The center will be housed in the Department's Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) and will work in tandem with the existing Secretary's Task Force for Rural Education. Former U.S. Commissioner of Education William Smith will serve as the center's director. It is estimated that nearly 42 percent of the country's public schools are in rural communities or small towns. More information can be found at www.ed.gov/nclb/freedom/local/rural/. (article continues on page four)

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Welcome Cal Boyle to the Montana GEAR UP Team!!

As 2006 begins, we are very happy to introduce our second School Grant Manager: OPI GEAR UP Specialist Cal Boyle! Mr. Boyle is a native of Butte, where he graduated from Butte High School. He pursued his Bachelor of Science degree at Carroll College in Helena where he majored in Biology and minored in Chemistry. After graduating from Carroll, Cal did two years of graduate studies in Animal Science at MSU-Bozeman where he also completed his secondary education certificate in 1997. Cal taught science for five years at Kalispell Junior and Flathead High Schools as well as for two years in Wisconsin at the middle and high-school level. Cal and his wife Maureen, who coaches volleyball at Carroll College, live in Helena, and they have a four-month-old boy named Keiran.

In joining Montana GEAR UP, Cal is excited to be able to make a difference in the lives of students. "In my experience, both in my own education and in the years I've spent teaching," Cal says, "the biggest key for students to succeed is believing in themselves, and the biggest key for teachers and staff to promote student success is to instill in students the belief that 'I'm worth spending time on'." Welcome to the team, Cal!



Montana GEAR UP School Grant Managers:
 Linda Safty and Cal Boyle

The GEAR UP Spotlight: Vaughn Middle School

7th Graders Learn A Valuable Lesson on the Importance of Family in Mexican Tradition

Excerpts from article by Gwen Raczkowski, Technology and 7th/8th Grade Teacher at Vaughn School

Students in my class spent several weeks learning about the cultural and spiritual significance of and preparing for the traditional Mexican celebration called El Dia De Los Muertos: the Day of the Dead. My class learned the history behind this tradition and the many symbols still used today in the celebration of El Dia De Los Muertos. Over the course of our

studies, we prepared for this cultural experience by creating a traditional family altar - or 'ofrendas' - for our classroom celebration. Each item placed on the altar represents a value that ultimately illustrates the importance of family and faith in Mexican culture still today.



Classroom 'ofrendas' - traditional family altar

In order to show our family members and ancestors how much we care for them, we place on our altar items that identify them: photographs, favorite toys and sweets for those who died as children, favorite beverages and foods for those who died as adults, and religious emblems treasured by the departed. These things are also on our altars so that the departed can remember their life and enjoy a few of the things they enjoyed during their life for the time they are with us.

As we celebrate this tradition, we do our best to be joyful, for our family members are happy or sad if we are happy or sad. We share stories about our loved ones and ancestors, play traditional music, and dress our best. Doing these things and preparing an altar are ways we show honor and respect for those who have come before us. And when we die, we know that they will welcome us into their arms because death is not the end. It is merely part of the ongoing cycle of life. For there to be a spring, there must first come summer, fall, and winter.



Traditional "Pan de Muerta" - Bread of the Dead

January Reminders

- Northeastern Regional Meeting in Havre Jan. 10th at 2:00 pm at MSU-Northern Student Lounge
- Western Regional Meeting in St. Ignatius Jan. 11th at 10:00 am at the Buffalo Ranch Café, West Side, Hwy 93 Mile Marker 32
- Southeastern Regional Meeting in Billings Jan. 12th at 1:00 pm at MSU-Billings Student Union Bldg.
- 2005 GEAR UP graduate surveys are due January 13, 2006 for 1999 Grantees.
- Online student survey completion deadline is January 25, 2006.
- Winter Liaisons Meeting is January 31–February 1, 2006 in Helena.
- College Goal Sunday is February 12th, 2006. Check out www.collegegoalmt.org for more information.
- Spotlight articles for the February newsletter are due January 20th and can be sent to Cyrus Malkin at cmalkin@oche.montana.edu.
- This newsletter can also be viewed on our website (www.gearup.montana.edu).
- If you know of anyone who would like to receive this newsletter, send his or her information to Cyrus Malkin at cmalkin@oche.montana.edu.
- Happy New Year!!



Take a Look at College Summit by Kelly Chapman, Student Assistance Foundation

We've all seen the national statistic that shows low-performing high income students go to college at the same rate as high-performing low income students. We know that nationally college graduates earn, on average, \$1 million more over their lifetime than high school graduates. What can be done to improve this trend for Montana students? For starters, we can help students navigate the gap between high school and college, possibly through College Summit.



Earlier this year, Regent Lynn Hamilton, Dr. Kirk Miller, chair of the Board of Public Education, and I had the opportunity to observe College Summit, a college access program that helps low-income, first generation students who are "better than their numbers" transition from high school to postsecondary education.

The program addresses three main hurdles to college access:

1. The absence of a college-going culture
2. A gap in application management
3. Inadequate relationships with colleges

According to College Summit, 79 percent of their workshop participants in other states enroll in college – equal to the college enrollment rate of our nation's high-income students and almost double the rate of their low-income peers. And, 80 percent of them stay in college. By unlocking the college-going potential of underrepresented students, College Summit is a tool to bring about lasting, systemic change for students who need assistance managing the transition to postsecondary education. We were very impressed with the program and the results, and we are interested in piloting the program in North Central Montana.

To that end, we have invited Katie Mullen from College Summit to join us in Havre on January 10th to provide an overview of the program to the local community. This session will provide more information about College Summit and their interest in working with Montana students and colleges, and College Summit will have the opportunity to learn more about college access in Montana, especially in rural communities. The program starts at 10:00 a.m. and will conclude by 2:00 p.m. Lunch will be provided. Anyone with an interest in learning more about College Summit is welcome to attend. Please let us know if you will be able to join us by calling Darbie Hess at (406) 495-7393 or e-mailing her at dhess@safmt.org.

We hope to see you on January 10th!

NOTE: Montana GEAR UP especially encourages schools in the Havre area to send a representative to learn more about the program.

National Endowment for the Humanities—*We the People* Bookshelf

As part of its *We the People* initiative, the National Endowment for the Humanities is collaborating with the American Library Association to offer the *We the People* Bookshelf – a program to encourage young people to read and understand great literature while exploring themes in American history. Public and school libraries are invited to apply to receive the Bookshelf, which consists of 15 thematically related books and supplemental materials to help with publicity and the organization of programs; at least 1,000 libraries will be chosen. Every year the Bookshelf explores a different theme. For 2005-06, the theme is "Becoming American." Applications will be accepted online through January 17. For more information, please visit www.neh.gov/wtp/bookshelf.

Winter Liaisons Meeting—January 31-February 1st, 2006

The Montana GEAR UP Winter Liaisons Meeting is scheduled for January 31 and February 1 in Helena. The meeting will start at noon on the 31st and end by 2:00 on the 1st to allow for as much daylight travel as possible. The meeting will be held at the Lewis and Clark Library at 120 South Last Chance Gulch. The library is near GEAR UP's new office so we will make sure you have an opportunity to stop by and see our new home. A block of rooms is being held until **January 15th** at the Days Inn at 2001 Prospect on the east side of town. To reserve your room, call (406) 442-3280, and be sure to ask for the Montana GEAR UP room block.

Director's Message—continued from page one

In December, I requested nominations for teachers to serve on a focus group to assist the Center in its planning. Several schools submitted names, and I forwarded them on to the national office. We hope at least one Montana teacher will be selected for the focus group. If someone is selected from your school, please pass that information on to me or your School Grant Manager.

Also on the national front, Congress approved the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriation conference report. This report includes \$306 million appropriated for GEAR UP. However, GEAR UP, like all discretionary programs, is subject to a 1 percent across-the-board appropriation cut in FY 2006. Therefore, FY 2006 funding for GEAR UP will be approximately \$303 million. Despite the 1 percent cut, the appropriation is still a critical legislative accomplishment for GEAR UP. This cut should not affect the award made to Montana GEAR UP; rather it will reduce the amount available for the new round of grant competition.

With the security of another year of funding and a full staff at the state level, we will focus on moving forward with the new grant as well as wrap up the final year with our high school students under the 1999 grant. As we do that, we look forward to working with you to further the mission of Montana GEAR UP:

Montana GEAR UP believes that postsecondary education is possible for all Montana students, regardless of economic background, and strives to empower them to realize that ambition.

Montana GEAR UP Summer Programs

Summertime in Montana...is there anything better? For many Montana GEAR UP students, however, summer break can be long, boring, and anything but productive. Montana GEAR UP plans to offer four summer program options that will give students opportunities to learn and grow, experience college life, meet new people, and have fun (all at the same time)!

Option #1: Middle School Academic Enrichment Summer Camps

Montana GEAR UP plans to fund 6-10 geographically-dispersed academic enrichment summer camps for GEAR UP students entering grades 7, 8, and 9 in Fall 2006. Academic Enrichment Summer Camps must provide (1) stimulating and age-appropriate learning opportunities in a variety of courses; and (2) development of academic and social skills to better prepare students for college. Decisions for these programs will be made around March 1st, and promotional information/materials will soon after be available to each GEAR UP school. The deadline for students to apply for the camps will be around May 15th.

Option #2: High School Summer Program

Montana GEAR UP is working with specific colleges and universities to develop a strong summer program for high school students. Potential host institutions have been selected because of geographic location, ability to host a residential camp, and partnership status with Montana GEAR UP. Selection of the actual host sites will take place in late January. Two important questions often asked by GEAR UP students will be addressed: (1) What is college life going to be like?; and (2) How can I better prepare myself to go to college? We anticipate that the summer programs will be 3-6 days in length and accommodate 25-40 students from GEAR UP schools across the state. We are also exploring the possibility of holding a Quantum Super Camp in Montana this summer.

Option #3: Local Summer Programs

Montana GEAR UP will once again provide funding for local summer programs! All reasonable, relevant and quality programs will be funded in two categories: (1) non-residential summer program or camp for middle school students; or (2) credit recovery program for middle school or high school students. Application materials regarding local summer programs will be sent to each GEAR UP school January 15th with a deadline for proposal submission of March 12th. If you have any questions about local summer programs, please contact Linda Safty at lsafy@oche.montana.edu or (406) 444-0848.

(Article continues next page)



Governor's Post-Secondary Scholarships by Janice Kirkpatrick, Scholarship Coordinator

The Montana Guaranteed Student Loan Program (MGSLP) is once again in the process of administering the Governor's Postsecondary Scholarship for the 2007 academic year. This scholarship was created in the 2005 legislative session under House Bill 435 and approved by the Montana Board of Regents at its November 16-18, 2005 meeting in Bozeman. There are three categories to the Governor's Postsecondary Scholarship: merit-at-large, merit, and need-based.

Merit At-Large Scholarships:

Students must apply for the merit-at-large scholarship and submit a completed application to the MGSLP no later than March 31st of the award year. There will be a total of 55 scholarships awarded annually based on merit: 20 scholarships in the amount of \$2,000 each to attend a four-year college for a maximum of four consecutive years and 35 in the amount of \$1,000 each to attend a two-year college for a maximum of two consecutive years. Merit-at-large scholarships will be ranked by the MGSLP and forwarded to the postsecondary institutions. The financial aid offices at colleges will verify enrollment and financial need, and then make the scholarship offers based upon this list.

Merit Scholarships:

The merit scholarship consists of either \$1,000 awarded annually and renewable annually for four consecutive years if attending a four-year college, or \$1,000 awarded annually and renewable annually for two consecutive years if attending a two-year college. The top-achieving, qualifying student from each of Montana's accredited high schools will receive a merit scholarship. The student with the highest GPA will receive the MUS Honor Scholarship, the next highest-ranking student with a minimum grade point average of 3.00 as of the end of the 6th semester of high school or, in the case of a student graduating in three years, at the end of the 4th semester of high school, and who has met admission requirements at the college they plan to attend, will be eligible to receive either the four-year or two-year Governor's Scholarship. The 3.00 GPA must be maintained through the 7th semester of high school (or the 5th semester if graduating early).

Need-Based Scholarships:

Colleges will be allocated need-based awards each year by MGSLP based upon the most recent full-time equivalent enrollment (FTE) information provided by financial aid offices to MGSLP for students enrolled in a two-year certificate or associate programs. MGSLP will then advise each college of the specific number of general, health science, and technology scholarships it must award. The financial aid office at each institution will be responsible for identifying and awarding these scholarships. Each institution will receive a minimum of five need-based scholarships, regardless of the actual FTE calculation, and the financial aid office will be responsible for identifying and awarding scholarships to need-based recipients. Need-based scholarships in the amount of \$1,000 will be awarded annually for a maximum of two consecutive years. Financial need is the only criteria on which the scholarship will be based.

We encourage students from GEAR UP schools to become familiar with these scholarships and to apply for the merit-at-large. We are currently in the process of developing the application form for this scholarship, which will be available online at www.mgslp.org. Hard copies will also be available at MGSLP.

NOTE: Applications will be mailed to GEAR UP schools once they are available.

2005-2006 Gates Millennium Scholars Nomination Deadline

Nomination deadline for the 2006-2007 Gates Millennium Scholars program are due January 13th, 2006. The Gates Millennium Scholars (GMS), funded by a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, was established in 1999 to provide outstanding low income African American, American Indian/Alaska Natives, Asian Pacific Islander American, and Hispanic American students with an opportunity to complete an undergraduate college education in any discipline area of interest. For more information, or to obtain nomination guidelines and forms, visit www.gmsp.org. Last year Montana GEAR UP student Trista Ebensteiner from St. Ignatius High School received the Gates Millennium Scholarship valued at \$75,000. This is a wonderful opportunity not to be missed by your students!

Montana GEAR UP Summer Programs—continued from last page

Option #4: Summer Camps Scholarships for GEAR UP Students

Many existing summer camps support the mission and goals of Montana GEAR UP, and we are currently compiling a list of these opportunities. Students who are interested in attending a summer camp that is on the list may apply for a scholarship to assist with tuition and travel expenses. The amount of the scholarship award will depend on the camp expenses, the number of scholarship requests, and the funding available. For more information, or to request that a camp be considered, please contact Annette Walstad at awalstad@oche.montana.edu or at (406) 444-0598.

College Goal Sunday is Coming! By Libby Siebens— SAF College Goal Sunday Coordinator

College Goal Sunday is a volunteer, charitable effort to assist low-income students and those with no college-going tradition with the successful completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form. Financial aid administrators and other qualified professionals will be on hand at each of the 17 sites across Montana to ensure students receive assistance in understanding and completing the paperwork necessary to receive financial aid for college. College Goal Sunday is open to everyone planning to attend college next year, including students from all income levels and college going traditions. The Student Assistance Foundation received grant funding from the Lumina Foundation for Education to implement College Goal Sunday in Montana and is in its second year of administering the grant. This year, College Goal Sunday will be on February 12th at various locations across the state. Visit www.collegegoalmt.org for more details and for a listing of sites.

We would like to extend our thanks once again for those GEAR UP liaisons and counselors that participated in College Goal Sunday last year. Thank you for encouraging your students to attend, directing them to the website to register, helping them get their tax information in order, and volunteering your time at the event.

Basic FAFSA training January 18th from 1:00-2:00 p.m.

For anyone interested in learning more about the FAFSA, please feel free to call in and log on for basic FAFSA training offered by Mapping Your Future for College Goal Sunday volunteers.

Access instructions:

The training session will include an online presentation with audio via conference call. You will need to participate online and on the call.

Conference call:

Call (800) 214-0694 and enter access code 230648# about five to 10 minutes prior to the conference start time. By calling early, you won't miss any part of the agenda.

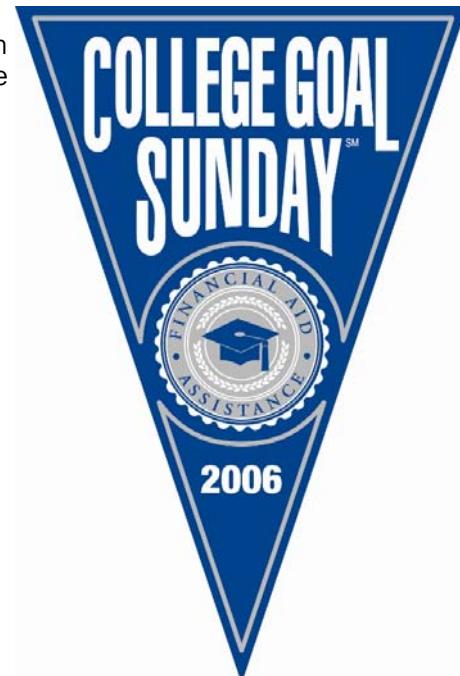
Online presentation:

Go to imeet.mapping-your-future.org/imeet OR

Go to the Mapping Your Future home page at mapping-your-future.org about five to 10 minutes prior to the start time. Then, click on the words "College Goal Sunday FAFSA Training" at the bottom of the screen.

Enter your information at the login screen.

After logging in, you won't need to do anything else – the screens will change for you. No special equipment or software plug-ins are needed to view this presentation.



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